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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000136

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DEPARTMENT FOR A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG AND AF/E  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR CALLS FOR STRATEGIC  
ENGAGEMENT WITH OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a February 2 meeting, CDA Fernandez warned Presidential Advisor Presidential Advisor Dr. Ghazi Salahadeen that an implosion of GOSS due to falling oil prices and revenues would have disastrous implications for Sudan and the NCP. Salahadeen responded that the NCP is a proponent of stability in South Sudan and will support GOSS President Salva Kiir, as it maintains relationships with other political players in South Sudan. The CDA cautioned Salahadeen that the NCP has started off on "the wrong foot" with the new Administration through its perceived military support for Hamas and Iran, bombing of Muhajarriya, and various human rights abuses. Salahadeen argued that Sudan and the U.S. should move beyond day-to-day issues on the ground to develop a political framework upon which to develop relations and that all issues can be resolved with the United States. He surprisingly cited Sudan's recent support in the selection of the new Somali president as an example of Sudan's positive role in the region. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During a meeting with CDA Fernandez February 2, NCP strategist and Presidential Advisor Dr. Ghazi Salahadeen agreed that a collapse of GOSS due to falling oil revenues would be disastrous to the NCP and opined that past northern governments "fell or stood on the question of Southern Sudan". He stated that the implosion of GOSS is "a real possibility" and cited recent tribal unrest in Warrab, Malakal, and Juba as cause for concern. Salahadeen laid much of the blame on GOSS, arguing that it must "put its house in order" to survive. CDA cautioned Salahadeen against any NCP efforts to take advantage of the situation to weaken GOSS as "there is no substitute for Salva Kiir and the NCP shouldn't do anything to undermine him". Salahadeen responded that the NCP has strategically decided not to undermine Kiir, but noted that the NCP maintains relationships with other southern political actors, such as Bona Malwal and SPLM turncoat Lam Akol. "We have a relationship with them, but we are not using them to undermine Salva." Ghazi raised the issue of national elections and declared that "the NCP needs the elections" but the "SPLM is not interested". Salahadeen argued that due to the effects of the financial crisis on Sudan, it will be difficult for the north to provide any additional financial assistance to GOSS. He stated that the prevailing NCP view is to act toward the South as "a compassionate, elder brother" and support the current GOSS government. The CDA reminded Salahadeen that many in the West would place the blame for the fall of GOSS, no matter the actual cause, at the feet of the NCP.

¶3. (C) The CDA advised Salahadeen that suspicions of Sudanese military support to Iran and Hamas have started the NCP's relations with the Obama Administration on a bad footing and called for the NCP to provide evidence to support its denial of the allegations. Salahadeen responded that it is

"difficult to conceive how Sudan could smuggle weapons to Hamas", arguing that "Hamas and Iran already have good relations" and do not need to use Sudan as a broker or transporter. He conceded that Sudan does "have an axe to grind with Israel on a number of issues, not just Hamas and Palestine" as the "Israeli and Zionist lobbies are very active on Darfur. We believe that we are fighting the Israelis in Darfur". The CDA replied that, regardless of the NCP's view of Israel, it should not become embroiled in an additional conflict by providing material support to Hamas or Iran. "If you are not doing this, show that it isn't true. Sudan has enough problems with the USG and you don't need any new ones."

14. (C) Salahadeen expressed optimism that the NCP and the current Administration could move beyond "small things which no one can prove" and focus on "real issues" through a strategic framework for U.S./Sudanese relations. The NCP intellectual expressed appreciation for President Obama's interview on Al-Arabiya and references to the Middle East during his Inaugural address. He said that there is a "dawning perception that he is different." He said that while the NCP is "highly suspicious of the U.S. endgame in Darfur, the NCP is not fatalistic and can work with the new Administration as "pragmatism is the national philosophy of the U.S." Ghazi noted that President Obama may have the wisdom in finding a way forward on Sudanese issues that the previous administration lacked."

15. (C) Salahadeen raised the issue of the likely ICC indictment of President Bashir to reject rumors of NCP infighting over the announcement. "If you are banking on

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divisions in the NCP, you are wrong." According to Salahadeen, NCP officials will rally around the President in the event of indictment as they view any threat to Bashir as a threat to the entire political system. He predicted that the indictment itself will be "stillborn" and claimed that China and Russia have given Sudan firm affirmations to offer support at the Security Council. He claimed that African states will also oppose ICC action as many African regimes view the ICC as a "European institution". While Salahadeen "never expected that the U.S. would take the side of Sudan on the ICC issue", he holds out hope that the new Administration may eventually consider an abstention on an Article 16 motion. Salahadeen stated that the NCP response to an indictment will be measured, as the regime does not want to be entrenched in a battle over the criminal court. "Unless Sudan does something egregious, the ICC indictment will die by attrition." Rather, he said, the regime will pursue a "middle way, based on its interests in Darfur and keeping the South from imploding."

16. (C) CDA raised other recent GoS actions that have elicited negative international responses. Regarding the bombing of Muhajarriya, the CDA noted that JEM excels at spinning favorable press coverage out of military conflict with the SAF and advised Salahadeen that the NCP should act cautiously with this in mind. The CDA raised the arrest of opposition politician Hassan Turabi, which Salahadeen concurred was "silly" and should never have taken place. Salahadeen agreed that while Turabi was a "provocative nuisance", his detainment transformed him in the eyes of many Sudanese from a villain to a victim." According to Salahadeen, the arrest was intended to send a message to those who would take advantage of the ICC to criticize the regime, noting that "At least now people are paying lip service to the national consensus in support of the President."

17. (C) Salahadeen pointed to Sudan's support for the newly elected President of Somalia, Sheikh Sharif, as a positive action in line with U.S. policy. Salahadeen said he viewed the favorable U.S. response to Sharif, who has long-standing ties to Sudan, as a promising sign for developing relations with the Obama Administration. Salahadeen told the CDA that

he met Sharif twice in Khartoum and that the GOS supported Sharif because he has the right Islamic and tribal credentials to re-unite Somalia and create "some semblance of authority".

18. (C) COMMENT: The NCP's desire to avoid discussion of issues on the ground in favor of a broader framework for U.S./Sudan relations signal the regime's frustration with the daily challenges in Darfur - the regime feels it is unfairly targeted for criticism over bombings while rebel groups roam freely in Darfur. Salahadeen's explanation of Sudan's relationship with Hamas and Iran was ridiculous (Ghazi himself is one of the architects of Sudan's relationship with Iran) and does little to assuage concerns that Sudan is developing greater military ties with these actors. Likewise, Salahadeen's declaration of NCP support for Salva Kiir is qualified by his reference to Lam Akol and Bona Malwal as important NCP contacts, both of whom the NCP has used in the past as instruments of its general strategy to divide and conquer its opponents in the South. Given the inability of one of the NCP's brightest thinkers to recognize the negative consequences of its real and perceived bad behavior, the regime may be unable to fully take the kind of game changing action that would create the positive momentum it seeks for political support against the ICC - but a carefully managed political framework with the U.S. could well move the regime in the right direction in Darfur and on the CPA. Post will provide suggestions on a strategy for Darfur in a separate telegram.

FERNANDEZ